The order of the chairman is viewed both in terms of speedy disposal (about three months) as well as the quality of the decisions.

There have been large numbers of cases where proceedings have dragged on for years.

According to rules, the Chairman is required either to decide himself or refer it to the committee of privileges (which is not mandatory) for a preliminary inquiry.

In several cases the presiding officers have “determined the question” themselves, without referring it to the committee.

Experts feel the Chairman could have acted after referring it to committee of privileges or committee of Ethics.

Both members have not disobeyed any whip or posed a danger to the stability of any government.

Provides stability to the government by preventing shifts of party allegiance.

Ensures that candidates remain loyal to the party as well as the citizens voting for him.

Promotes party discipline.

Facilitates merger of political parties without attracting the provisions of Anti-defection law.

Expected to reduce corruption at the political level.

More concentration on governance is possible.

Provides for punitive measures against a member who defects from one party to another.

Interferes with the member’s freedom of speech and expression by curbing dissent against party policies.

By preventing parliamentarians from changing their allegiance, it reduces the accountability of the government to the parliament and the people.

There are several instances that presiding officers take politically partisan view.

A member voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party.

A member abstains from voting, or votes contrary to the party whip in a motion of vote of confidence or motion of no-confidence.

Disqualification should be limited to cases.

Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms

Various Recommendations

Provisions which exempt splits and mergers from disqualification to be deleted.

Pre-poll electoral fronts should be treated as political parties under anti-defection law.

Political parties should limit issuance of whips to instances only when the government is in danger.

Decisions under the Tenth Schedule should be made by the President/Governor on the binding advice of the Election Commission.

The Anti-Defection Law was passed in 1985 through the 52nd Amendment to the Constitution, which added the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution.

The main intent was to combat “the evil of political defections”.

The objective was to enhance the credibility of the country’s polity by addressing rampant party-hopping by elected representatives.

If a member of a house belonging to a political party:

Voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party.

Votes, or does not vote in the legislature, contrary to the directions of his political party.

If an independent candidate joins a political party after the election:

The Chairman or the Speaker of the House takes the decision to disqualify a member.

If the defection is with respect of the Chairman or Speaker, a member of the House elected by that House shall take the decision.

A person shall not be disqualified if his original political party merges with another.

He and other members of the old political party become members of the new political party.

He and other members do not accept the merger and opt to function as a separate group.

This exception shall operate only if not less than two-thirds of the members of party in the House have agreed to the merger.

The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, M. Venkaiah Naidu, disqualified two Janata Dal (United) leaders Sharad Yadav and Ali Anwar Ansari as members of Rajya Sabha.

The allegation was that by indulging in anti-party activities they had “voluntarily” given up the membership of their party.

According to a Supreme Court judgment, “voluntarily giving up the membership of the party” is not synonymous with “resignation”.

The Law Commission (170th Report)

Pre-poll electoral fronts should be treated as political parties under anti-defection law.

Political parties should limit issuance of whips to instances only when the government is in danger.

Decisions under the Tenth Schedule should be made by the President/Governor on the binding advice of the Election Commission.
The orders of the Supreme Court on police reforms issued in 2006 have not been implemented in letter and spirit by all States.

Rape cases continue to be under-reported because of the social stigma that women and their families face.

Experts said the spurt in cyber crimes had come especially in the post-demonetization period.

Today, the Indian information technology (IT) law goes soft on cyber crime. Except cyber terrorism and child pornography, all other cybercrime offences are bailable.

Our criminal justice system is failing to generate deterrence.

Low conviction rates with only 47% convictions in Indian Penal Code (IPC) crimes at the national level and lack of a lawful definition of crime.

In Delhi, DNA testing has low priority. Delays in the crucial evidence are a setback as samples deteriorate with time.

Despite the recommendations of Law Commissions and the Supreme Court, we do not have separate wings for investigation of crime and for law and order.

Nearly two-thirds of the prison population is awaiting trial and half the number of under trials is normally acquitted.

The increase in crimes against women must prompt better policing and all-round reform.

State governments must make serious study for the causes of violent crime and crime against women.

Urgent reform such as modernising the police, recruiting the right candidates and teaching them to uphold human rights.

Focussed programme to universalise education and skills training.

The orders of the Supreme Court on police reforms must be implemented.

Police force should become more transparent and socially accountable.

The police need to be sensitized. The police blame the women in most cases, especially in cases of domestic violence.

Eliminating political interference in its working.

As a measure of data improvement, NCRB must record not just the principal offence in a case, but list all cognisable offences separately.

Government must look at the report seriously to make policies and take measures for freedom from violence.

Recently Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh released the annual publication of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), “Crime in India 2016”.

The NCRB has published data on 19 metropolitan cities with a population of over 2 million and included new section on Missing Persons & Children, Fake Indian Currency Notes and arms seizure.

Uttar Pradesh accounted for 9.5% of total crimes reported in the country.

Delhi ranked no. 1 in terms of crime rate which is more than twice the national average.

Delhi accounted for the maximum number of rape cases at 40%.

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar record the maximum number of murders.

The national tally on crimes against women, like rape, abduction, assault and cruelty by husband and relatives, is up by 2.9% over that of 2015.

Many cybercrime cases are not investigated.

Crimes against women and children have increased drastically owing to “better reporting”, expanded definition of rape, sexual harassment and assault.

Police now mandatorily required to register a case.

Tendency of the police to register multiple sections for one crime to ensure better conviction rate.
Criminalising Triple Talaq

Introduction

Arguments opposing Criminalisation
- Since marriage is a civil contract, the procedures to be followed on its breakdown should also be of civil nature only.
- Civil redress mechanisms must ensure that Muslim women are able to negotiate for their rights both within and outside of the marriage.
- The harsh punishment defies the doctrine of proportionality.
- Three years in prison of the convicted husband will end up penalising the already aggrieved wife and children too.
- The punishment will aggravate the insecurity and alienation of the Indian Muslim community.
- In the recent supreme court judgement, it never said that triple talaq is to be criminally punished.
- Invoke a secular law that already exists: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005.
- Parliament should have passed a law stating that the utterance of the words “talaq, talaq, talaq” would amount to “domestic violence” as defined in the PWDVA.
- The PWDVA was conceived as a law that ensures speedy relief — ideally within three months — to an aggrieved woman.
- While PWDVA is civil in nature, it has a reasonably stringent penal provision built into it.

Arguments favouring the Bill
- The practice of triple talaq has continued despite the Supreme Court order terming it void.
- The practice is arbitrary and, therefore, unconstitutional.
- The law is about justice and respect for women and is not about any religion or community.
- It protects the rights of Muslim women against arbitrary divorce.
- Instant triple talaq is viewed as sinful and improper by a large section of the community itself.

Concerns / Challenges
- It would be difficult to prove triple talaq.
- The bill violates the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution under article 14 and 15.
- Some Muslim women’s groups raised concerns about “maintenance” if the husband is sent to jail.

What is Triple Talaq?
- An instant and irrevocable divorce where a Muslim man can divorce his wife by uttering “talaq” thrice.
- The husband does not need to cite a cause for divorce or the presence of his wife during the announcement.
- It is not universal among Muslims.
- Many Islamic nations including Bangladesh, Morocco, Indonesia, Malaysia and Tunisia have regulated this.

It significantly empowers Muslim women.
- The penal measure acts as a “necessary deterrent”.
- Triple talaq adversely impact rights of women to a life of dignity and is against constitutional principles such as gender equality, secularism, international laws etc.
- The proposed law would be applicable to the entire country except Jammu and Kashmir.

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill to make instant triple talaq illegal and void was passed by Lok Sabha.
- Any pronouncement of triple talaq by a person upon his wife, by words, either spoken or written or in electronic form or in any other manner, shall be void and illegal.
- The fine amount could be awarded as maintenance or subsistence allowance.
Many in the above communities are politically and economically strong enough and placing the whole community under the reservation system will be unethical. Providing reservations to the well-off communities may deprive Low caste members the Government jobs, where their numbers are very low.

If Government starts entertaining the castes like Jats, Kapus, Patel and Maratha, then on the same line other caste people will start agitation for reservation.

It will lead to neglect of merit and it may cause social unrest as it was at the time of Mandal commission.

Political parties have misused the tool of reservation for their vested interests which has hampered the real objective of granting reservation.

The government should consider the economic, political and social wellbeing of the community and make a balanced decision.

Problems of these castes should be addressed through government schemes and programmes.

Importing skills and training through standup India, Student Startup Policy, etc.

Government needs to scale up the educational and employment opportunities both in private and public sector to avoid conflict between different communities.

Progressive steps should be taken to ensure that poorer section among the backward communities get the benefit of reservation system.

Political parties must not use caste or reservations as political tools which defeats the very purpose of granting reservations.

The policy of reservation should be gradually phased out after it serves its purpose.

The principles of Justice, Liberty and Equality are integral part of our constitution and the policy of reservation was adopted to entitle these rights to historically degenerated classes. Thus government and civil society must work in tandem to realize its true purpose.


The Patidars, Kapus, Jats, and Marathas have been demanding inclusion among the Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

This demand reflects the challenges they are facing on the job market.

The rationale behind introduction of reservation system in India is to address historical inequalities and bring the social and educational backward classes into mainstream.

States are empowered through Article 15 and 16 for advancement of socially and educationally backward classes.

Communities like Patidars claims for Reservation on ground of inadequate representation in Government Jobs.

For Patidars and Jats there is decline in the probability of owning or cultivating land.

With a general decline in fortunes in the agrarian sector, they are seeking non-agricultural jobs, especially government jobs for which they demand OBC status.

The Indian economy is not creating many jobs.

Wages in the private sector are much lower than in the public sector.

Salaries of government jobs are mostly attractive at entry-level.

Unskilled population and increasing attrition in private sector.

Due to historical negligence caste based reservation are necessary in India.

Reservation helps in level playing field because we cannot expect groups who are historically deprived of education, skills, and economic mobility to suddenly start competing with those who had access to these means for centuries.

Reservation is a policy tool that promotes equality rather than undermines it.

When people from all social groups are represented in government, higher education etc. it is less likely that marginalized groups will be denied fundamental rights and access to their fair share of society's resources.

Though Meritocracy is an important aspect, it has no meaning without equality.

To a great extent caste based reservation reduced the gap between upper and lower castes.

Many people of lower castes have stepped up the social ladder and are now on an equal footing with the 'general' population.

On the other hand, many upper castes are still suffering from poverty and illiteracy.

Reservation system can harm the economic structure of the country as it could bring down the efficiency of its labour.

Caste based reservation may develop into communal riots.

Many times economically sound people enjoy the benefits of caste based reservation, leaving aside real needy people.

In Ashok Kumar Thakur v. Union of India, Justice Ravindran opined that when more people aspire for backwardness instead of forwardness, the Country itself stagnates.
Constitution guarantees equality, freedom, justice and dignity to all citizens, including the Divyang.

Exclusion of persons with disabilities from education, employment and participation cost at around 7% of national GDP.

Accessible services and business premises can broaden the customer base, increasing turnover and positively impacting the financial health and social brand of the company.

Research estimates the market size of product categories needed by persons with disabilities in India at Rs. 4,500 crore.

WHO report said that all of us at some point will be “temporarily or permanently impaired” and those “who survive to old age will experience difficulties in functioning.”

Thus ensuring a disability-sensitive development agenda across all ministries, sectors and causes becomes critical if growth has to be truly inclusive.

Disabled persons continue to struggle to secure employment and accessibility with poor infrastructure.

Attitudinal, institutional, and infrastructural barriers remain.

World Bank stated that 15% of the world’s population experience some form of disability.

They are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes than persons without disabilities.

Legislation alone is not enough; implementation remains abysmal.

Data from the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People show that 84% of seats for persons with disabilities lie vacant in top universities.

A one-size-fits-all approach is unhelpful for disabled persons. There needs to be a shift from a charity-based approach to a rights-based approach.

Care must be taken to ensure disability-inclusive development.

We have to create sensitive and harmonious society, where every person feels empowered – and a society of empathy, where one person feels the pain of another.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have the potential in enhancing their social, cultural, political and economic participation.

Incorporation of accessibility principles across all new developments will also complement the Accessible India Campaign.

Representation of persons with disabilities in all ministries, commissions and committees to advise and ensure inclusion in all policies, programmes and developments.

Adherence to the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines should be made mandatory while developing websites and mobile applications.

No Divyang person should be evaluated by his or her physical ability, but by his or her intellect, knowledge and courage.

December 3 is a significant day for millions of persons with disabilities across the globe.

In 1992, the United Nations announced that December 3 would be observed every year as International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

It aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society.

2017 Theme: “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all”

The disability rights movement gained momentum in the 1970s when disability was started to be seen as a human rights issue.

The UN General Assembly proclaimed in 1978 that 1981 would be the International Year of Disabled Persons.

Later, 1983-1992 was marked as the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006 was a big step towards viewing persons as “subjects with rights” and not “objects of charity”.

India is a signatory to the UNCRPD and ratified it in 2007.

Further, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that persons with disabilities must be both “beneficiaries and agents of change”.

The 2030 Agenda pledges to “leave no one behind”.

India is home to one of the largest disabled populations in the world.

In India, according to the 2011 Census, 2.21% of the population has one or multiple types of disabilities.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 recognises 21 kinds of disabilities.

The Act also increased the quota for disability reservation in higher educational institutions from 3% to 5% and in government jobs from 3% to 4%.

India still lags behind in removing infrastructural, institutional and attitudinal barriers.

Most buildings in India are not disability-friendly, despite under Accessible India Campaign all ministries are instructed to make their buildings accessible.

Data on disability points to a correlation between ‘disability’ and ‘poverty’.

The term ‘divyang’ (divine body) is used for persons with disability.
Constitutional protections under Article 21 (right to life and liberty) and Article 20 (3) (right against self-incrimination).

Need for Anti-torture law for extradition of offenders from other countries.

Recently United Kingdom refused to send a person to India to face trial, on the ground that there was "no effective system of protection from torture".

Conditions in India's prisons, especially the chronic problem of over-crowding, are a reason for the country's extradition requests failing.

To reduce custodial violence.

Elimination of Torture is the main aim behind UN Convention

A standalone law will be seen as a tangible way of expressing India's commitment to eliminate torture.

Such a law will be in the national interest.

To prevent cases like bus conductor forced to confess the murder of a school child in Delhi.

India must expeditiously ratify the CAT and enact a Prevention Against Torture Act.

The ratification demonstrates goodwill and political intention to comply with international norms and standards.

Enacting a law prohibiting torture is both a moral imperative and a pragmatic necessity.

Legislative measures must aim to eliminate all forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading forms of treatment.

Any Torture Prevention Bill must be comprehensive to deal with torture in the broadest manner possible, and ensure punishment and compensation as methods of prevention.

India must show to the world that it is committed at combating the terror and implement the promises made to the UN

To be a world power, India must act like one.

The Supreme Court had described torture as an instrument of "human degradation"

Recently SC dismissed the petition to ensure a standalone law compliant with the UN Torture Convention.

The SC said the government has to take a political decision on whether it should ratify the treaty.

In recent years, there have been widespread appeals from civil society groups and international organisations for India to ratify the convention.

The United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) came into force in 1987 and India signed it in 1997.

India is repeatedly promising and failing to ratify the Convention Against Torture.

Many countries have recommended that India must ratify the CAT

273rd Report of the Law Commission has also recommended ratification and drafting a comprehensive legislation

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has strongly urged the government to recognise torture as a separate crime and codify the punishment in a separate penal law.

Torture cases have escalated in India.

NHRC had reported a significant number of torture cases involving police and security organisations.

In Raghbir Singh v. State of Haryana (1980), the Supreme Court said it was "deeply disturbed by the recurrence of police torture."

In another case, Supreme Court said that torture is assuming alarming proportions.

The recent example of a bus conductor being forced to confess to murdering a school child in Delhi is a pointer to the use of torture as an investigative tool among policemen.

Torture is prevalent in different contexts

In criminal cases, it is evident in the numerous custodial deaths that continue to occur

In the context of terrorism and organised crime cases

In conflict environments, torture and detention are common
According to ILO study, the participation of women in informal employment or in informal sector is higher than men. Jobs for Indian women, especially rural women, remain primarily in the agriculture sector. The share of women in services and industry is less than 20%. Women's household and domestic work is invisible, unpaid and unrecognised.

There are no sufficient jobs. The jobs that are available are marginal, low paying and insecure. Issues of safety for women or absence of facilities like creches.

Patriarchal values and marriage.

More young women are studying so they are not looking for jobs. Families are becoming more prosperous so women are no longer going out for work.

The India Human Development Survey highlighted that MGNREGA brought more rural women into wage labour.

The theme of 2017 Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) was "Women First, Prosperity for All".

China, with its powerhouse economy, has 64% of its women working, one of the highest rates in the world.

In the US, it is over 56%.

In Nepal and Bangladesh it is ahead of us.

Women need the 3C’s Confidence, Capabilities, access to Capital. Men need to understand that women are their equals.

Require a change in thought process about the role of women in society and the economy.

Women need lot more formal sector employment opportunities with better wages.

Large-scale job creation in the formal sector will need sustained reforms in labour laws and skilling ecosystems.

Huge investments will be needed in upskilling and educating women and the girl child.

Financial inclusion of women and encouraging women entrepreneurs

Strengthening legal provisions for safety and security of women.

Gig Economy provides women flexible work options to pursue their career while not missing important milestones in their family lives.

Formalization of India’s job market is one the biggest gifts our policy makers can possibly give to the Indian woman.

Female labour force participation is a driver of growth and therefore, participation rates indicate the potential for a country to grow more rapidly.

Having equal gender representation is a financial positive to businesses today besides being a social responsibility.

Research has shown that when women have access to more work opportunities, they gladly take them.

It is estimated that India can potentially boost its GDP by $700 billion in 2025, by raising female labour-force participation rate.

Preventing their socio-economic exploitation and lowers domestic violence.

Improving their quality of life.

Enhancing a woman’s control over household decision-making.

Enabling her to lead a life of dignity.

Providing greater impetus to women entrepreneurs would be critical for India’s growth.

Women entrepreneurs help drive innovation and job creation, besides assisting in addressing the world’s most critical challenges.

According to the World Economic Forum’s “Global Gender Gap Report 2017”, India is ranked at 108th position out of 144 countries which has fallen by 21 places from last year.

We have fared poorly in wages and participation of women in the economy.

As per the World Bank report, we have one of the lowest workforce female participation rates, ranking 120th among 131.

In terms of contribution to GDP, women are currently under-represented.

At 17%, India has a lower share of women’s contribution to GDP than the global average of 37%.

The participation levels have been dropping in the last few years.

Indian woman worker in informal sector have fewer skilling opportunities and lack of job security.

Women will have to deal with poor quality and even unsafe working conditions.

Low wages and denial of statutory benefits like social security.

Higher risks of discrimination as compared to her male colleagues.

Benefits like maternity leave or related facilities will not be accessible to her in the informal sector.
There are issues of corruption in the courts.
Judiciary has not evolved a mechanism to look into the corruption charges on the judges.

When CBI interferes in the working of judiciary, it leads to executive control over the judiciary, which goes against the basic principles of the constitution.

The chief justice constituting a 5 judge bench including himself when he is facing allegations ignores the justice to be seen to be done.

The use of Article 142 has also become a sign of immense judicial indiscretion.

Article 142 gives judges the power to do whatever it takes to secure justice.

Judicial ineffectiveness is to a great extent responsible for the increase in crimes like rape, murder, looting, cheating and so on.

There are almost 30 million cases pending and it takes between 12 to 15 years for a judgment. In the meantime, witnesses could die, turn hostile, go missing, or get killed.

In many cases, what is being dispensed as justice after so many years of litigation is flawed.

The cardinal principle that the Chief Justice of India is the master of the roster must be re-examined.

Urgent reform is required to restore the moral authority of the Supreme Court.

The primary principle is that justice not only be done, but be seen to be done, which always holds good.

Lot of care needs to be exercised so that the anti-corruption measures taken do not undermine the independence of the judiciary.

Transparency in court proceedings and appointments of judges.

Creation of a transparent, full-time independent judicial complaints commission to investigate complaints against judges.

Judicial system should be accessible and effective for the poor.

Setting up an All India Judicial Services

Use of information technology tools for better court/ time management

Making the bar and the bench sensitive and accountable towards issues of social justice.

There has to be a mechanism to enforce, in letter and spirit, all that is enshrined in the constitution.

The Indian Judiciary plays an increasingly important role in the life and the governance of this country.

It is argued that the Indian judiciary has become all powerful, mostly by taking on enormous authority in policy areas that are technically beyond its ambit.

Recently it was declared that the CJI is the master of the roster with the sole prerogative to determine which Bench of judges gets to hear which cases.

For clearing the backlog of cases

To ensure speedy justice. Speedy justice is not only our fundamental right but also a prerequisite for maintaining the rule of law and delivering good governance.

In its absence, the judicial system ends up serving the interests of the corrupt and the law-breakers.

Trade, commerce, manufacturing, services, personal safety hinge on the effectiveness of the rule of law. Therefore, judicial reforms should be made the prime development agenda.

Judicial accountability is more important, as derogation of values in judiciary is far more dangerous than in any other wing of the government as judiciary has to act as the guardian of our constitution.

The courts in India enjoy virtually absolute power than any Court in the world. So it is vital that judges of the superior judiciary be accountable for their performance and their conduct.

If judicial independence is a pillar of our democracy, then without accountability there can be no legitimacy

Judicial activism itself is an outcome of judicial independence

It is undertaken to protect those who may not otherwise have ready access to justice

To see to it that the government protects the fundamental rights of its citizens.

To uphold politico-socio-economic justice

To fill the perceived gap created by failure of executive.

Judicial enthusiasm to participate in social reforms and changes

Examples of judicial activism are

- Protection of women at work place by framing Vishaka guidelines
- Rescuing children working in industry
- Banning of liquor shops around highways
- Mandating standing for national anthem in cinema halls

There are arguments that judiciary is stepping into areas that are, strictly in the realm of policy

When judicial activism and review wades into policy making, sometimes its consequences can be disruptive.

Therefore there has to be a fine balance between all the organs of state to uphold constitutionalism.

Cooperative constitutionalism is the responsibility of the three organs of the State to protect the Constitution.
The regulatory body has to be high-powered, politically independent and represent all sections of stakeholders, particularly patients and NGOs active in the field.

The regulator should insist on transparency — hospitals clearly publicising their rates for standard treatments and procedures.

The regulator should get regular data on the percentage of deviation from standard treatments.

For example, hospital A can report that in December 15 per cent of the patients paid 10 per cent more than the cost of packages. The regulator can then investigate the outliers.

Regulators must ensure that doctors are not paid commissions for referring patients to diagnostic centres.

Hospitals can avoid paying commission to consultants by not having outside consultants.

Takshashila Institution suggests an independent Patient Protection Service with one of its officers posted in each hospital with 150-300 beds.

The healthcare system needs social entrepreneurs who do not look for just profit.

Implementation of National Health Policy, 2017 in letter and spirit will help in curbing malpractices such as minimising instances of negligence.

Citizens also need to be empowered so they understand their rights and the recourse available to them when something goes wrong.

Citizens must be educated about diseases, possible complications and approximate treatment costs.

In some parts, Jan Suwas are organised where citizens report their experiences with health providers in the presence of government officials, NGOs and community leaders.

Such interventions should be replicated as they increase citizen participation and also make health governance more accountable.

There is a need for the medical profession to self-regulate and adhere to the highest ethical standards.

We need to focus on building a strong public health system.

With 50% of deaths due to non-communicable diseases, we need to do more to keep people healthy and reduce the need for costly hospital treatment.

Never before has the proverb prevention is better than cure been more relevant for the country.

Private hospitals have been in the news lately for all the wrong reasons.

The Delhi Government cancelled the license of a private Hospital for medical negligence.

Instances of suspected medical negligence and exorbitant bills.

Many view that doctors get a referral fee for MRI tests, CT scans and other diagnostic tests.

The Clinical Establishments Act, 2010 for regulating all public and private clinical establishments has taken effect only in 4 states.

In healthcare there is an asymmetry of information. The patient does not know which provider or procedure is good for him.

Private and public health facilities compete for government funding and the right to provide healthcare to citizens.

There are incentives for providing the quickest and cheapest treatment.

It is a level playing field, and if the government health facility does not provide quality service, it stands to lose out.

Thailand’s Universal Health Coverage has earned global appreciation.

Public and private hospitals are treated on a par, and the beneficiary chooses where she goes.

Medicare, which covers all Canadians, is publicly financed and privately run.

Medical practitioners must only charge fees fixed by governments.

Bureaucratic and rent-seeking regulation.

Getting global funding is becoming difficult as the economy booms and India is no longer seen as very poor.

Retaining motivated doctors and nurses is getting difficult with corporate hospitals making better offers.

Dip in Private equity funds in Indian healthcare sector.

Public spending on health is less than 1% of GDP.

Per capita public health spending is about $15, less than in Bhutan, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

It is estimated to account for over 5 lakh patients dying due to medical malpractice.
In UK, the US and some other democratic countries - parliament meets at a fixed time. They sit throughout the year with breaks in between. It allows them to plan their agenda well in advance and electoral cycles, or other political compulsions, do not disrupt the legislature's calendar.

Though parliament acts like the 'watchdog' of our democracy and hold the executive accountable, it is the executive that decides when the parliament should meet.

Recent trend of declining number of sitting days. Parliament in the last ten years has met for an average 70 sittings a year.

In comparison, UK's House of Commons met for an average of 150 days a year over the last 15 years.

The United States House of Representatives met for an average of 140 days a year over the same period.

The executive is collectively responsible to the legislature. Allowing the government to call the Parliament to meet could be in conflict with this principle.

It enables detailed planning of legislative and policy work all year round.

It negates the need for enacting Ordinances.

It enables accountability of government functioning by Parliament throughout the year.

Have a calendar of sittings announced at the beginning of each year so that members can plan better for the whole year.

A deep understanding of parliamentary history and traditions and, the constitutional role and responsibilities of the Indian legislature is necessary.

Law makers must think about institutional reforms needed for strengthening the overall role of parliament.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution recommended that the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha should meet at least 120 and 100 days a year respectively.

The winter session of parliament has been delayed due to the election in Gujarat.

No session was ever postponed for as long as four weeks for a single assembly election.

The delay of summoning parliament has come under much criticism.

Law-making is dependent on when Parliament meets.

Thorough scrutiny of the government's functioning and deliberation on national issues.

Functioning of Parliament is key to a well-functioning democracy.

Article 85 of the Indian constitution says that the gap between two sessions of parliament should not be six months.

It is the prerogative of the executive to convene parliament on a particular date.

After amendment in 1951, three sessions of parliament in a year have become the pattern.

The Constitution does not specify when or for how many days Parliament should meet.

Parliament is entrusted to be the 'watchdog' of our democracy and hold the executive accountable.

The legislature sanctions money for running the government.

The executive cannot withdraw money from the consolidated fund without the authority of law made by the legislature.

The executive cannot levy or collect any tax from citizens without the authority of law made by the legislature.

The legislature makes laws which the executive is bound to enforce.

The legislature has the power to remove a government when it loses the confidence of the house.

To carry out these functions the legislature establishes systems to ensure the accountability of the executive.

The most crucial system is an independent secretariat for the legislature.
Supreme Court Rules undermined the RTI in many ways.

- A time frame for furnishing information
- An appeal mechanism
- Penalties for delays or wrongful refusal of information.

Unlike the RTI Act, the Rules do not provide for:

- The Rules make disclosures to citizens contingent upon “good cause shown”.
- The Rules allow providing information at its unquestionable discretion, violating the text and spirit of the RTI.

Issues with SCs Administrative Rules

Offices of all constitutional functionaries should be made amenable to the RTI law to bring transparency and accountability in their functioning.

There is nothing to hide and therefore judiciary should be brought within RTI’s ambit.

Arguments for including Judiciary under RTI

- Article 145 starts with the phrase “subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament”, which means that Parliamentary law would prevail over Rules framed under Article 145.
- The citizens’ right to know the true facts about the administration of a country is essential for a democratic State.
- It will decrease the no. of case pendency as judiciary will have to give solid reasons & explanations for it.
- Timely conclusion of cases.
- It will increase the faith of people if they could also know about judicial working
- Corruption will be checked

In corruption cases by the judiciary
In case of manipulation of judgement
In certain cases which need transparency like cases involving human and social welfare.

Judiciary being the guardian of constitution must be included in the ambit of RTI, but in the cases like

SCs arguments for exemption under RTI

Way Forward

RTI - a key to good governance is one of major legislative change made.

- Supreme Court rejects RTI requests related to judicial functions, and insists that applicants must request information under Supreme Court Rules (SCR).
- Recently Delhi High Court upheld this stand of Supreme Court.
- The High Court also concluded that there is no inconsistency between SCR and RTI Act.

Arguments for including Judiciary under RTI

- Supreme Court Rules alone governed access to the information
- It claims that the Rules are consistent with the RTI
- It insists on the primacy of Supreme Court Rules over the RTI
- An independent judiciary is considered to be the cornerstone of a democracy.
- The dissemination of information under SCR is part of judicial function, exercise of which cannot be taken away by any statute.

SCS discharge sovereign functions and they should be exempted from coming under the RTI Act.

- SCR have been framed under Article 145 of the Constitution and they provide for regulating the practice and procedure of the Court and have the effect of law.
- The legislature cannot make law to deprive the courts of their judicial functions conferred under the procedure established by law.
- Since there is no inconsistency between the SCR and RTI Act, the latter cannot override the former.
- It will compromise secrecy & security involved in certain cases. This may prove detrimental for our country.
- It will increase the political involvement in judiciary
There are asymmetries in how the government and the private sector share revenue and risks.
The private sector partner wants to maximize profit, which is not compatible with providing universal access to quality services.
Lack of a proper regulatory framework
Levy of user charges which remains unregulated which has serious implications for society.
Some PPP projects attempted earlier have failed

India needs a universal healthcare programme that hinges on affordability and access.

McKinsey, World Bank and the World Economic Forum have stressed on PPP model as the way ahead, but with clear policy guidelines to ensure the successful implementation of PPP models

There should be transparency and accountability with suitable policies and commitment to public good.

Setting up of independent regulators

The government should develop working guidelines based on successful experiences of different states

Proper oversight that will prevent unnecessary medical interventions as well as corruption.

Public health spending must be raised to at least 2.5% of GDP
Smart business models need to be put in place for private players to achieve reasonable returns on investment.

Utilising CSR spending for improving healthcare delivery

India must produce more doctors, whether for the public or private sector to improve healthcare delivery

Recently Karnataka passed a law that would allow it to cap the rates of certain private healthcare services. More states may follow suit.

Policymakers must aim for convergence of commercial and social interests to make a large on-ground impact.

Given India is on track to become the most populous nation in the world, it is important for the government to provide efficient healthcare services to the largest section of people across the country.

PPP in Healthcare Delivery in India

Issues in PPP framework
Introduction

Need for PPP model in healthcare

Way Forward

Issues in Public Healthcare

Conclusion

The highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental right of every human being.

However, healthcare delivery poses a significant challenge for policymakers in India.

The news of how much a private hospital charged for dengue treatment, despite not being able to save the patient’s life, was met with an outrage.

To provide universal healthcare

The government alone cannot meet the healthcare infrastructure and capacity gaps in Tier II and Tier III cities as well as rural areas.

PPPcs can ensure that government services are delivered in an economical, effective and efficient manner.

To provide Health insurance. Successful examples are Karnataka’s Yeshasvini Cooperative Farmer’s Healthcare Scheme and Andhra Pradesh’s Arogya Raksha Scheme

The government’s spending on healthcare is around 1.15% of its GDP.

Private healthcare providers have done well in providing healthcare services as compared to their government counterparts

States have already experimented with PPP in healthcare delivery in a limited way.

Severe lack of resources like one doctor per 1,700 citizens in India, well below the minimum ratio of 1:1,000 stipulated by WHO.

In rural areas and smaller towns of India, even basic health services remain inaccessible.

Inadequate government spending on healthcare and lack of access to health insurance

The quality of public health services in India continue to remain below expectations

Government’s inability to build sufficient capacity and infrastructure

Difficulty in reaching out to poor and vulnerable groups

An undersized skilled workforce; and the absence of upgraded technology
Access to dual-use technologies that can be used for both civil and military purposes - in aerospace, telecommunications, navigation, computing, electronics, sensors and lasers.

India will be able to sell its nuclear reactors and other materials independently produced without attracting adverse reactions.

It is expected to build up a strong case for India's entry into NSG.

It will give India additional opportunities to interact with the countries who are members of all four non-proliferation groups.

Realignment of India in export control policy framework of other Wassenaar Arrangement members including eligibility of certain licensing exceptions.

Facilitate high technology tie-ups for Indian industry and easy access to high-tech items for its defence and space programmes.

India will have access to 'intrusion software' technologies, which form a part of the mass-surveillance systems.

Membership of the Arrangement would not automatically entail any preferential treatment from other WA members.

Post-WA and post Doka La crisis, one can expect hardening of the Chinese stand on India's NSG bid.

Wassenaar Arrangement (WA)

- The Wassenaar Agreement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, commonly known as the Wassenaar Arrangement is a grouping of 42 countries, of which India is the latest entrant.
- It seeks to bring security and stability, by fostering transparent practices in the sale and transfer of arms and materials and technologies that can be used to make nuclear weapons.
- The aim is also to prevent the acquisition of these items by terrorists.
- Every 6 months member countries exchange information on deliveries of conventional arms to non members.
- Membership in the Arrangement has been part of India's quest for membership in the export control organisations.
- It is seen as a significant victory for the country's non-proliferation track record.
- It will broaden India's access to sensitive technologies.
- It is one more recognition, after MTCR, of the growing role India plays in today's world.
- Robust export controls can act as an important tool for ensuring international peace and stability.
- Wassenaar Arrangement membership along with India's recent success at the International Court of Justice elevates India's diplomatic profile.
- If China decides to apply for the WA membership in the future, India will have a say in the decision - just as currently China has on India's application of NSG membership.

Support for India's Membership

- India's application was supported by Russia, USA, France and Germany.
- Russia had expressed optimism about India's membership in the Wassenaar Arrangement. This will help the bilateral ties.
The INSTC was initiated in 2000 by Russia, India and Iran.

It is a multi-modal transportation route linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran, and onward to northern Europe via St Petersburg in Russia.

From Mumbai to Bandar Abbas in Iran, by sea
From Bandar Abbas to Bandar-e-Anzali, an Iranian port on the Caspian Sea, by road
From Bandar-e-Anzali to Astrakhan, a Caspian port in the Russian Federation, by ship
Thereafter into the Russian Federation and further into Europe by Russian Railways.

**North South Transport Corridor (NSTC)**

**International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**

**Chabahar Port**

India and Iran’s “civilizational ties” is the bedrock for the bilateral relationship

The first phase of Chabahar port project was inaugurated recently.

The New Delhi Declaration, 2003 between India and Iran focused on building transport corridors and deepening energy cooperation.

India’s ambition of reaching Afghanistan — since Pakistan had blocked land transit and access fuelled the need for developing Chabahar port.

The project timeline was undone because of India’s growing ties with the US administration under President George W. Bush.

The project gathered momentum in 2015 as the Iran-P-5+1 talks bore fruition and geopolitics took a new direction.

In 2016 trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan was signed towards developing the project.

Iran President Rouhani even called for the day to be celebrated as “the Day of Chabahar”, which brought spring to the three countries.

In 2017 the new US administration’s attitude towards Iran has complicated the matter.

India, Iran and Afghanistan have signed an agreement to grant preferential treatment and tariff reductions at Chabahar to Indian goods headed toward Central Asia and Afghanistan.

**Chabahar is a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and not an exclusive project handed over to India**

Whereas Beijing has already got full control of Gwadar

China has already activated a $10 billion credit line to Tehran, with another $15 billion close to fulfilment

Chabahar and Gwadar even have a sister-cities agreement, promoting trade and people-to-people ties

India’s fears stem from the possibility of Chinese naval presence in the near future in Gwadar

Analysts believe that for the protection of this vast investment will lead China to increase its military footprint in the seas around South Asia.

US imposing sanctions on Iran for its suspect nuclear energy programme might affect Japan, South Korea and other countries interest in developing and investing in Chabahar

India has committed $500 million to Chabahar, with an aim to reach the resource-rich regional countries.

India, Iran and Afghanistan are committed to developing the port into a massive project that can handle a cargo of 80 million tonnes.

To make it a commercially and strategically viable option, Indian policymakers will have to use the Chabahar project as a lynchpin to integrate it with INSTC.

“Chabahar” literally means a place where all four seasons of the year are like spring. For Delhi’s economic and strategic reach, it’s time to make that a reality now.

**India’s Strategic Significance**

Chabahar, which is located 72 kilometres west of Pakistan’s Gwadar port, holds immense strategic and economic significance for India

India has spent about US$ 100 million to construct a 218 km-long road from Delaram to Zarand to link up with Chabahar Port.

It acts as a viable gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

It is also key to accessing the Central Asian markets for Indian goods.

It would provide a major impetus to Afghanistan’s economic reconstruction efforts.

Many believe that the Chabahar project is to counter China’s development of the Gwadar port in Pakistan and China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The port would reinforce mutual and regional cooperation between Iran and India.

It also shows the importance of the port in the development of the region and the routes that connect Central Asian states.

The port will increase the capacity of loading and unloading of ships as well as the employment rate.

INSTC and Chabahar Port will complement each other for optimising Indian connectivity with Russia and Eurasia.

According to some estimates, the Chabahar route plus INSTC could boost trade to a total of US$ 170 billion from India to Eurasia.
The United States has formally told the World Trade Organization (WTO) that it opposes granting China market economy status.

The move comes as trade tensions between Washington and Beijing are increasing.

Beijing insists that under Section 15 of the Protocol of Accession, the country’s upgrade as a market economy was automatic on the completion of 15 years of its WTO membership in 2016.

Market Economy status is a status conferred on the country exporting the goods.

The prices of the goods on which they are exported by the country are not questioned and it is accepted as the benchmark.

Prior to this status, country is considered as a Non Market Economy (NME).

Here the importing countries can determine the prices for the exports from NME country.

It often leads to imposition of higher anti-dumping duties by importing countries to protect its domestic market.

As per 2001 agreement (Protocol on accession of China to the WTO), WTO-member countries had then decided to deem China as a ‘market economy’ from December 2016.

The 15-year time period was given to China to carry out internal reforms and transition into a ‘market economy.’

However, unlike in ‘market economies’ where prices are market determined there is still a significant government influence in the Chinese market.

So many countries are opposing to give MES status to China.

While nations in Africa and Latin America who are dependent on Chinese investments to boost manufacturing are inclined to grant MES to China.

Several nations that have a strong manufacturing base are concerned about according MES to China.

Chinese government influence in its market causes distortions in international trade and export of cheap goods to other countries.

Government subsidies for various sectors.

Currency manipulation and the related price fixing.

Lack of proper business accounting standards etc.

Bad loans of banks and absence of transparency in lending rates.

Concerns that other developing countries may follow Beijing’s lead.
A close look reveals that China’s international agenda is exploitative, especially for the global environment. The infrastructure projects by China will open a Pandora’s box of environmental crises, including large-scale deforestation, habitat fragmentation, wildlife poaching, water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. In the Amazon, for example, big mining projects cause serious local degradation and promote widespread deforestation.

A World Bank study of more than 3,000 overseas projects funded or operated by China revealed how it treats poor nations as “pollution havens”.

It is transferring its own environmental degradation to developing nations that are in need of foreign investment. The biodiversity gets threatened and species become endangered. Exploitation of resources like coal, oil, timber etc.

Affects the world’s commitment to tackle climate change.

With growth in China’s economy due to global outreach it will raise the demand of fossil fuel based energy and pollution load across the country.

Development of port infrastructure in Sri Lanka, Djibouti and Pakistan may have possibility in destruction of marine environment.

China will need to be more transparent to achieve its development goals.

China must work to reduce its illegal timber imports. Belt and Road initiative must be “green, low-carbon, circular and sustainable”.

To tackle China’s environmental degradation, the countries affected and the international community has to work together.

Along with its own interests, China should work to improve economic growth, food security and social development in many poor nations.

China with its astounding size of economy must shoulder the financial burden of poor nations to combat climate change.

China is escalating its investment and infrastructure development across the globe. The isolationism of the US Trump administration has created an international leadership vacuum that China is eager to fill.

China’s footprint is growing with its One Belt, One Road infrastructure project, with $1 trillion investments across Asia and Europe to revive ancient trade routes through a massive rail and maritime network.

It is deepening economic involvement in volatile countries like Myanmar and Zimbabwe.

China is the world’s biggest consumer of illegally poached wildlife and wildlife products.

Chinese consumption drives much of the global trade in wildlife exploitation and smuggling. Over the past 15 years, China’s appetite for ivory has largely driven a global collapse of elephant populations.

China is also the world’s biggest importer of illegal timber, a trade that endangers forests while depriving developing nations of billions of dollars.

Illegal timber still flows across China's border with Myanmar.

China’s plans for infrastructure expansion will irreparably degrade much of the natural world.

China’s One Belt One Road initiative will carve new roads, railroads, ports, and industries in at least 70 nations across Asia, Europe, and Africa.

China’s pursuit of natural resources is also escalating across Latin America.

China is pushing to build a 5,000km railroad across South America to make it cheaper for China to import timber, minerals, soy and other natural resources from ports along South America's Pacific coast.

China is in the first position in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.

China’s first overseas military base in Djibouti and building militarised islands in the disputed South China Sea.

China is promoting its political system as a "model" for other countries to follow.
The lives of many millions of Indian and Bangladeshi citizens are reliant on the Brahmaputra river. The Brahmaputra is an important resource for India’s own water diversion plans—the national river interlinking project. It is considered a powerhouse to meet India’s energy demands in the future. The Brahmaputra annual flooding cycle helps re-fertilise soils in the Assam plains. Hence it provides the necessities for agricultural and marine farming.

In recent years China has resisted to share hydrological data on YTB during the monsoon season. China charges approximately $125,000 for the data it provides to India; at the same time, it sends similar data to Bangladesh for free.

Discussions over the YTB have often been overshadowed by the border dispute. There has been no progress in discussing issues of who has the right to how much water and the impact of dams and diversions.

China wants multilateral cooperation to transboundary water sharing, while India on the other hand, prefers bilateral relations.

India and Bangladesh have a stressed relationship over Teesta river sharing, whereas China is cooperating more with Bangladesh on water issues.

It needs to be examined through data, hydrological regimes, upstream interventions and their downstream implications.

India needs to clearly envision the desired end goal and strategic outcomes for dealing with impending water conflicts.

India needs to restrengthen its relationship with Bangladesh by pushing the Teesta river agreement and restore its image as a responsible upper riparian.

India must galvanise the support of its neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh to prevent China from implementing large-scale diversion projects.

India needs to be firm in negotiations with China on water rights, as it did in the case of the Doklam stand-off.

India needs to push for bilateral agreement on water sharing as it has with Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.

India must treat water as a strategic resource and shine an international spotlight on China’s unilateralist course.

There is news report that China is planning to divert the waters of the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra (YTB) to Xinjiang province. China plans to build a 1,000-km-long tunnel to divert water from the Brahmaputra River in Tibet to Xinjiang region.

This has emerged as a point of contention with China-India strategic relations.

Indian and Bangladesh have raised concerns for the adverse impacts it would have on downstream areas.

It has raised concerns among environmentalists about its likely impact on the Himalayan region.

The wildlife and ecology in the downstream will be affected.

Analysts have described the China taking control over Brahmaputra water as “most dangerous”.

The fear of drying up of the Brahmaputra has become widespread in India, especially in Assam.

The fertility of the soil in Assam plains will be affected as flood waters from Brahmaputra will decrease.

For India, national security implications also follow as the Yarlung Tsangpo also flows into a disputed border region with China.

It can be seen as China encircling India to reach a deal on the sharing of YTB that favours China’s economic interests.

**WILL DAM LEAD TO DOWNSTREAM DISASTER?**

China has begun generating electricity from Tibet’s biggest hydropower project.

![Map of China and India showing the Brahmaputra river and邻国](map.png)

- Zangmu dam
- Proposed dams: Dagu, Jiusa and Chia
- Water reservoirs expert in Assam say Zangmu and other dams on Yarlung Zangbo have the potential to sweep away highland settlements and forests and bury the lowlands in silt.
- A case in point is the 2001 disaster after an artificial dam in Tibet gave away to kill 26 people and damage property worth ₹140 crore along river Siang in Arunachal Pradesh.
- But experts add, disaster forecast depends on precise data on the dams, which China is unlikely to give.
- Downstream impact also depends on the distance of the nearest dam from the India-Tibet border.
- Zangmu alone is unlikely to be dangerous, but release of excess water from all dams simultaneously will be devastating.
The crisis in the Korean peninsula reflects worrying disorder in the contemporary international system.

It is a clear message that isolating states that misbehave does not solve the conflicts rather it can further complicate existing crises.

The ability of the great powers to compromise and reach a workable consensus to deal with global crises seems to have considerably reduced especially with the arrival of Mr. Trump.

The current crisis is further intensified by the deal-breaking tendencies of Mr. Trump like in Iran nuclear deal.

No progress in the disarmament commitments of nuclear weapon states has eroded the faith of the nuclear have-nots in the global nuclear order.

Such erosion of global order has contributed to the North Korean crisis.

India has had diplomatic relations with North Korea since the seventies.

India is also not under any form of threat from the regime.

India should not directly involve in the negotiations.

It could play the role of a pathfinder, seeking common ground and enhancing trust and understanding between opposing parties.

Such an action would enhance India’s reputation within the comity of nations, especially as India seeks a permanent membership of the UNSC.

International sanctions and the use of force against North Korea will not yield the desired results.

A comprehensive, sustained and diplomatic solution will work.

According de facto “recognition” to North Korea’s nuclear weapons.

Involving the regional powers including China and South Korea to reach out to Kim.

Multilateral engagement would also prevent anyone from engaging in underhand dealings with Pyongyang.

Reviving the dormant Six Party Talks at the Pyongyang.

US must provide assurance relating to regime acceptance and gradual normalisation of relations.

The regime needs to be assured by the west that it would not seek a regime change and provide economic support.

Tensions over North Korea's weapons programme have risen in recent months.

The risk of such weapons being used was “greater today than during the Cold War”.

North Korea's new Hwasong-15 missile puts the United States, its principal adversary, within striking distance.

It is nuclear capable intercontinental ballistic missile, with range of Thirteen thousand kilometres. This covers all of earth’s continents except South America and Antarctica.

It is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and reaching the whole of continental United States.

It indicates the progress made by North Korea in developing Weapons of Mass Destruction.

North Korea has gone to a point of no return.

Lessons from the tragic end of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi would disincentivise North Korean Supreme leader Kim Jong-un to give up his weapons.

His policy is premised on the classical military strategy of escalating to de-escalate.

That means to initially escalate tensions to unacceptable levels and later ask for several concessions.

Being recognised as a nuclear weapon capable state would be the foremost objective.

Survival of his regime and an eventual removal of sanctions would be the natural consequences of such recognition.

China is worried about a lethal nuclear fallout in its neighbourhood and the potential rush of North Korean refugees into its territory.

China does not want a reunified Korea, which will undercut its rising regional predominance.

China does not want a regime collapse, because of strategic reasons.

China is not happy with the US decision to accelerate deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defence system.

Japan and South Korea are the real victims in this game of great power.

These two countries are seen as arch-rivals by Pyongyang, and they are located in the world's most dangerous neighbourhood.

What is complicating even more is the shaking of extended deterrence commitments of U.S. President Donald Trump’s “America First” policy.
The Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is part of China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). BRI includes the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) corridor, along with the MSR.

India has opposed the USD 50 billion CPEC, given its security impact in India’s backyard.

India also skipped China’s Belt and Road Forum that was held in Beijing this year.

New Delhi has, however, backed the BCIM.

Deadlock over the CPEC is because it’s being laid through Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

India has raised its reservations about it traversing through the disputed territory.

Maritime linkages across the Indian Ocean

Naval exercises and port projects

Enhancement of regional connectivity through the Belt and Road Initiative

China seems to be ready to ramp up business ties across South Asia.

China already has an FTA with Pakistan, and is exploring or negotiating FTAs with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

China’s massive infrastructure projects, including the development of Hulhule island and the “Friendship” bridge connecting it to Male.

Chinese companies investments of $1 billion

Chinese companies are exploring tourism prospects in the Maldives, leases to resort islands, and reclamation projects.

Chinese help during massive water crisis.

Maldives must be sensitive to New Delhi’s concerns in keeping with its India first policy.

Increasing the trade volume, people-to-people relations and India must increase its security in the region.

India must increase its investments in Maldives the way it is investing in Afghanistan.

India’s wait and watch policy needs a relook and act proactively.

India must be committed to support democracy, development and stability in Maldives.

The announcement of a free trade agreement between the Maldives and China is another sign of Beijing’s success in its outreach in South Asia.

This is also Maldives’s first FTA with any country.

Maldives and India “have strong historical and civilisational linkages, and also at the people-to-people level”.

Maldives is considered important due to its geographical location. Since located in the Indian Ocean region.

Maldives does not have an FTA with India.

The FTA agreement between Maldives and China will have a bearing on India and set the tone for its future diplomatic ties with Male.

Maldives is planning for FTA with other countries like Japan, US, UK and countries of the European Union without mentioning India.

It is China’s second FTA with any country in South Asia after Pakistan.

The FTA will draw the Maldives more closely into China’s security net.

Concerns that the PLA-Navy might be looking for a military base in the islands linked to projects in Djibouti, Gwadar and Hambantota.

President Abdulla Yameen also pledged support for China’s Maritime Silk Road (MSR). India has already expressed concerns over this road, because of its implications in the Indian Ocean Region.

India’s ongoing FTA talk with Maldives is at stake. Maldives political leadership has expressed displeasure over India.

India lacks in delivering on its promises.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not visited Maldives in the last three-and-half years.

There has been little debate and scrutiny of the FTA pact in Male.

The FTA was rushed through Parliament without having requisite majority.

Opposition has criticised the pact saying it undermined Maldives’ sovereignty and leaves the country in debt for China.

More than 70 per cent of Maldives foreign debt is owed to Beijing, which gives it huge leverage, undermining Maldivian sovereignty and independence.
Developed countries wanted 21st century trade issues like e-commerce, investment facilitation, MSMEs and gender equality. India toughened its stand on these issues. It said 'e-commerce' subject was not part of the original Doha agenda. India insisted that Doha round issues must be cleared first before taking up new issues. India expressed disappointment as the WTO failed to deliver on its promise of a permanent solution. India stood firm on its stand on the fundamental principles of the WTO, including multilateralism, rule-based decision-making, an independent dispute resolution, and special and differential treatment for all developing countries. India managed to protect all its interests without being accused of being deal breakers. This is indeed a diplomatic victory. India expressed its “deep disappointment” over the US’ refusal to agree on the public stockholding issue. India has not only protected its interests but also fought for countries which are more vulnerable than India. India opposed the joint declaration on “Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment”. India said WTO is not a forum to discuss gender. India is very much in favour of promoting gender issues, but discussions should be at the right forum at the right place. WTO has failed to resolve the basic issues in international trade. WTO’s Buenos Aires summit has failed to deliver a joint declaration of the member-states. Failure to have a permanent solution on public stockholding can damage the credibility of the WTO as a Ministerial Decision in Nairobi has not been honoured. There seems little danger at present of the WTO in an existential crisis. U.S. obstructionism has worsened the developed-developing countries divide. Both developed and developing countries need to reform food subsidies to improve international trade and to reduce rampant use of chemical inputs. Development and inclusiveness must remain at the heart of our work. India wants a permanent solution that would allow it to continue its food procurement programmes without any cap. Any Ministerial Declaration must reaffirm the principles of the multilateralism, the completion of the Doha Development Agenda, and special and differential treatment to developing countries. Agriculture reforms by eliminating the most trade-distorting farm subsidies used mainly by the rich developed countries. In the area of fisheries subsidies, balanced outcome is required to support millions of poor farmers. 

The 11th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) ended without any substantial outcome as it lacked consensus. It became the third ministerial conference after Seattle and Cancun where no declaration could be adopted. In the area of fisheries subsidies, there could not be an agreement on interim solution for banning illegal, unregulated, unreported (IUU) fishing. All members agreed to address fisheries subsidies by next summit (2019). Pushing back the efforts of developed countries on issues like e-commerce, investment facilitation and MSMEs. 118 WTO members and observers agreed to support the ‘Joint Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment’, which seeks to remove barriers and foster women’s economic empowerment. With the backing of more than 100 countries, India and China had jointly submitted a proposal to the WTO to eliminate the trade-distorting farm subsidies in several developed countries. The two countries see this as a prerequisite to address the imbalance in the Agreement on Agriculture. Developed Countries including US, EU and Canada are providing trade distorting subsidies to their farmers. On an average, an Indian farmer gets an annual subsidy of $250 whereas EU and US farmers get $60,000. These are at much higher levels than the food subsidies given by developing countries. Developed countries insist that developing countries should contain the subsidies within 10% of the value of production. In 2013 Bali Ministerial meeting developing countries were promised a permanent solution to the food subsidy by 2017 meeting. The G-33 coalition — which includes Indonesia, China and India — seeks a complete exemption from commitments to reduce subsidies. At Buenos, US blocked permanent solution on public stockholding for developing countries. This led to a collapse of the agriculture negotiations.
India has the world’s largest youth population, but isn’t yet fully capturing this potential demographic dividend.

Over 30% of India’s youth are NEETs (not in employment, education or training), according to the OECD.

The businesses consider corruption to be the most problematic factor they face when doing business within the country.

India is at 60th among the 79 developing economies in the World Economic Forum’s Inclusive Development Index.

The rise in inequality is compromising the pace at which India is lifting people out of extreme poverty.

The growing ability of machine learning to replace human workers is also a challenge.

The rising crude (oil) prices pose a challenge.

Agriculture remains in a slump though it is a significant contributor to rural incomes and consumption demand.

Foodgrain output in the kharif season contracted, which could lead to inflationary pressures on food prices.

India’s sluggish exports.

Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) or investment expenditure is falling.

Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR) is raising, means more capital is required for doing business.

Fiscal Deficit reached 96% of annual target. Revenue expenditure is growing at 10% instead of targeted 5%.

India is growing faster than any other large economy except for China.

Growth needs to be more inclusive for broadening India’s tax base.

India needs to get more women working.

Improving the quality of all government services, from the police and courts to education and health.

Better infrastructure and logistics; lower interest rates; Abolishing high rail freight rates that subsidise passengers.

Major reforms in the markets for land, labour and capital.

Industrial revival and increase in private sector investment are necessary for sustained growth in employment and output.

Fixed capital formation needs high policy priority.

Large job creating sectors like construction, agriculture, textiles, leather and tourism need greater focus.

Sustaining consumption, energising agriculture, and giving a big fillip to exports.

After falling for five successive quarters, GDP growth in July-September was 6.3%, up from 5.7% in the previous quarter.

The Gross Value Added (GVA) growth accelerated to 6.1% from 5.6% in the first quarter.

The positive result has been impacted significantly by growth in manufacturing.

The economic slowdown has been reversed, but the task of sustaining the trend remains.

Upgrade of India’s sovereign ratings by Moody’s (to Baa2, from Baa3).

India jumped up 30 notches into the top 100 rankings on the World Bank’s ‘ease of doing business’ index.

Deleveraging of balance sheets (as companies are reducing loan burdens)

Poor insolvency resolutions

Large influx of imports, especially manufactured goods.

The present banking system does not have core competency for efficient project appraisal and manage long-term project loans.

Stalled projects, both in terms of value and number, is a cause of concern.

Issues like land acquisition, environmental clearances and other market conditions.

Falling exports also seriously affected investment.
India is not a big exporter in the world and its share in the world trade is less than two percent. The Central government’s Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS) aims at increasing that share to 3.5 per cent by 2020. The government has taken several measures to boost exports in its midterm review of foreign trade policy 2015-20. Exports are an important driver of economic growth and will also help create much needed jobs for India’s growing workforce. They played an important role in transforming countries such as South Korea and China in recent decades.

Exports could help use up the excess production capacity To Earn Foreign Exchange and lowering Current Account Deficit (CAD)

Exports have been the biggest underperformer in this fiscal. Traders continue to feel the disruptive effects of the GST. Indian exports especially in garments and ‘ready makes’ are competing against Bangladeshi and Vietnamese exports.

However, the government working on increasing the ease of doing business should help India’s exports. According to the WTO, merchandise trade volume in 2017 is expected to grow by 3.6%, compared to 1.3% in 2016.

Vietnam and Bangladesh are becoming more competitive and are capturing the low-end manufacturing space being vacated by China. The latest Economic Survey (2016-17) highlighted how India is losing out in labour-intensive sectors. Regressive labour laws are keeping enterprises smaller than those in China, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Threat of rising protectionism and rising automation. Infrastructure bottlenecks, rigid land and labour laws, and inferior logistics

Exporters are facing a severe liquidity crunch because of delayed refunds in the new GST regime. With WTO declaring India’s per capita Gross National Product (GNP) exceeding $1,000 for three years in a row, the country will now be ineligible for export incentives that only poorer countries are allowed.

India has potential in increasing agricultural exports and marine products, but the markets in developed countries like US have strict standards for admitting agricultural imports.

The inverted duty structure is discouraging the domestic manufacturing...
Still its popularity is low compared with cash and cards, and many individuals and businesses won't accept bitcoins for payments.

Not being backed by any government entity is Bitcoin's biggest disadvantage.

It will render monetary policy and government policies ineffective.

The central bank will lose its control over the medium of exchange in the country.

Some see it as the future of money, and countries like Russia, Sweden and Lebanon are working to create officially-backed versions.

Nepal, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan have declared Bitcoins as illegal payments and in violation of the state law.

In India there are no clear regulations governing Bitcoins.

Indians appear to be following the global cryptocurrency boom because of the profits, loss of faith in cash, as well as the flattening of property and gold prices.

Niti Ayog has been asked to study the possibility of issuing government-backed and regulated cryptocurrency.

High demand for bitcoin in India has driven its price far higher than global rates.

In India crypto-currency is gaining popularity, primarily as a financial asset.

India has retained its position as a top receiver of bitcoin-related remittances worldwide, as per a World Bank report.

Need to engage with authorities and regulators to generate awareness about Bitcoins.

Investors must spend time educating themselves about bitcoin and the technology behind it.

In many western countries, Bitcoins are treated as property and capital gains tax is imposed on it. India should also treat it as property and impose capital gains tax.

Implementing strict KYC norms and eliminating secrecy of transactions.

Bring their trading under the oversight of SEBI.

A more realistic scenario in future could be using both bitcoins and fiat money side by side, with bitcoins used to pay to those who can accept it, and fiat money used to pay for basic goods and services.

Bitcoin, the world's most popular virtual currency, allows people to buy goods and services and exchange money without involving banks or government.

Bitcoins are basically lines of computer code that are digitally signed each time they travel from one owner to the next.

Transactions can be made anonymously, making the currency popular with libertarians, tech enthusiasts, speculators and criminals.

The value of one bitcoin touched a record high of $11,434 which has grown approximately 880 per cent since January this year.

Bitcoin uses cryptography to securely conduct a transaction between a sender and a recipient.

It is almost impossible to make duplicate copies of Bitcoin, or use it for more than one transaction at a time.

It is possible to send and receive any amount of money almost instantly anywhere in the world at any time.

Bitcoin’s attraction is that it frees their money from the actions of government.

In countries where inflation is high as a consequence of government policies, Bitcoin allows individuals to insulate themselves.

Helps start-ups to raise funds through Bitcoins.

It is immune to control by a government or other any kind of central authority.

Bitcoin makes payments fast and inexpensive.

Other cryptocurrencies that are in play apart from Bitcoins are Ethereum, Litecoin, Dash and Ripple.

It is a useful tool for money laundering and tax evasion.

Law enforcement agencies across the world are concerned over the use of Bitcoin, and other cryptocurrencies for crime.

They enable transnational criminal organisations to easily transfer funds which are difficult to track.

FOR INCOME-TAX authorities around the world, cryptocurrencies are posing a major challenge.

Online drug trade is estimated at $100 million worth of cryptocurrency each year.

In the last couple of years, there have been multiple incidences of fake cryptocurrencies.
Housing For All by 2022

Introduction

The government launched the “Housing For All by 2022” programme in 2015, with the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) as a key anchor scheme. PMAY envisages building 20 million urban units by 2022.

The government accorded infrastructure status to affordable housing, thereby opening an arena of growth opportunity for the sector.

Way Forward

A right to shelter is a basic human need.

To ensure a decent habitat for people in urban areas, particularly the poor:

Global examples indicate that affordable housing activities generate direct and indirect employment.

It also generates sustained consumption in the long term.

A 2014 study by the National Council of Applied Economic Research indicates that every additional rupee of capital invested in the housing sector adds Rs1.54 to the GDP.

Every Rs1 lakh invested in residential housing creates 2.69 new jobs in the economy.

For achieving UN’s SDG goal 11- ensure adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums:

To uplift the living standards of the people as well and pave the way for prosperous India.

Concerns / Challenges

The progress of PMAY’s implementation has been disappointing.

Supply side challenges include land availability and supply of quality developers.

Lack of participation of large organized real estate players due to low profit margins.

Massive capital expenditure at every stage.

The lack of skilled workforce will negatively affect the scheme.

Lack of clarity on powers of various agencies executing the scheme. Decisions that should be taken on a local level are often devised by state or the Central government.

The approval process is slow, which is again a big challenge. In the World Bank’s Ease of Obtaining Construction Permits Index, India was ranked 185 out of 187 countries in 2016.

Illegal settlements that is not fit for human habitation.

Lack of clear communication & co-ordination among the implementing agencies.

Land and property records are currently not digitized and remain in poor condition.

People residing in ancestral homes with ownership in the name of their deceased parents or the slum dwellers with no property rights face difficulty in availing interest subsidy on a home loan.

Countries such as Singapore and Sweden have such huge public housing programmes.

The private sector can play a role in implementing best construction practices, and in maintaining the housing stock, as practiced in New York.

By building a strong support system and hand-holding the real estate entrepreneurs, we could create an ecosystem of quality developers.

The government should proactively allow urban public land holding to be utilized for affordable housing projects.

Enable individual households who don’t have legal titles to in-situ upgrade their housing by providing them with security of tenure — even a “no eviction guarantee”.

Ahmedabad’s success with the Slum Networking Program shows that the security can encourage slum residents to invest money and upgrade their shelter.

The actual execution on ground needs to be accelerated to realize the true potential.

States need to simplify the process of updating property records so that citizens can obtain legal documents to their land and property.

A single window clearance can help in faster approvals.

Fast tracking approval processes and targeting the actual beneficiary.

The entire housing ecosystem needs to be well developed and all the stakeholders need to work collaboratively with high degree of conviction and risk-taking ability.
Key challenge is unequal access to the internet. The gender gap in mobile ownership.

Mumbai and Delhi still rank behind Jakarta and Manila in the most networked cities in the world.

Cybersecurity is a serious challenge. Cyber crimes and cyber terrorism has grown more rampant.

Service charges remain a challenge for people at the bottom of the digital pyramid.

Uninterrupted access to power is essential. However, around 22% of rural households across the country still do not have access to electricity.

A recent study shows that 19% of the Indian population remains unbanked or financially excluded.

Digital revolution must include communities and regions that were previously not part of information and communication technology (ICT) advancement.

Sectors must be opened to new digital business models through reductions in regulatory restrictiveness.

For countries to reap the digital dividend, there must be space for new digital competition, experimentation and entrepreneurship.

Removing red tape that burdens digital entrepreneurs with unnecessary costs.

Technological innovation is a boon for India, the only thing that matters is how much it is allowed to change the economy.

Government must formulate new electronics policy, software product policy and a framework for data security and protection.

The focus needs to be on creating technology that is affordable, developmental and digitally inclusive.

The idea of setting up special innovative zones for start-ups must be explored.

Ensure simpler tax compliance regime in order to further India's Global ranking in ease of doing business.

The need for internet and mobile application training aimed at less educated and the low-income groups.

The digital economy could be an important vehicle for change and could dramatically expand India's role and influence in the global economy and become a powerhouse of digital innovation.

Digital Economy refers to the full range of economic, social and cultural activities supported by the Internet and related information and communications technologies.

Some experts regard it as the third industrial revolution.

Some people consider the digital economy as a major growth enabler.

Digital payments, Make In India, Start-Up India, Skill India are among the key drivers of the digital economy.

Digital economy has the power to change the lives of millions of people in India.

In the next three years, India will add more than 300 million new mobile subscribers.

By 2025, it is highly likely that India will be the largest mobile market in the world.

India is developing a "mobile-first" digital culture, with smartphones fuelling a boom in e-commerce and other forms of business.

With a rapidly growing middle class, and a young, tech-savvy population, online personal services are about to take a big jump.

International companies are looking to increase their investment in India's digital economy.

Improved telecom infrastructure as well as affordable smartphones now gives the opportunity to benefit from services such as banking and retail.

According to industry experts, India has the potential to grow to USD 2 to 3 trillion digital economy by 2022.

Digital economy has the potential to generate huge employment opportunities.

Digital skilling has lot of potential as India has rich talent pool that can be used to meet global demand.

Estonia is now Europe's digital leader.

The country has succeeded in building high-tech infrastructure, and a regulatory culture that encouraged new digital competition.

However there are some countries in Europe that have protected markets from digitization because of fear of new competition.

But that misconception has blocked the economic renewal in many European countries.

India should adopt policies that serve the interest of the entire economy and avoid repeating the mistakes of some European countries.
Globally, cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cancer in women. Among Indian women, it is the second most frequent, according to the WHO. A 2012 study shows that India accounted for a third of all global cervical cancer deaths.

The number of cases remains high in rural areas, where sanitation and hygiene are low.

HPV is a group of viruses known to cause penile cancer in men, and cervical, vaginal, anal and vulvar cancer in women. HPV can also lead to throat or rectum cancer in both men and women.

The virus is transmitted through intimate contact, via sexual intercourse, oral or anal sex.

The virus poses a higher risk for HIV-infected persons, smokers, and those with high dependency on hormonal contraceptives.

Providing better hygiene, changing reproductive patterns, improved nutrition and water supply. Prevention must be prioritised because prevention cost will be much lower than treatment cost.

Till the decision for its introduction in UIP, the government should launch a pilot project in some of the areas.

Strengthen the screening system for the early detection of the Virus.

Encouraging Indian companies to manufacture vaccine with low cost.

Parents must speak to their children about safe sex and maintaining genital hygiene.

There has been a proposal that a vaccine against the human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes cervical cancer, be introduced in India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

The medical community in India remains divided over the vaccine's universal implementation. Punjab and Delhi have already begun HPV vaccination for girls.

Cervical cancer is the most common cancer amongst women. 71 countries had introduced HPV vaccine in their immunisation programme for girls and 11 countries included boys too.

Australia was the first country to introduce HPV vaccination in its school programme. Now it has one of the lowest rates of cervical cancer in the world.

It is easily available, safe and has good enough efficacy.

Funding to save the lives of women must not be considered a waste of resource.

Awareness on prevention and safe sex is low in India. We can’t rely on awareness alone to fight this disease.

National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) has proposed the inclusion of these vaccines in UIP.

The primary concern is cost, given the huge population and stretched health care budgets.

It would "divert scarce resources from more worthwhile health initiatives to a vaccine of doubtful utility".

The vaccine for 6.2 crore Indian girls aged 9-13 years, the cost to the government will be over Rs 56,000 crore.

Study shows that India is already witnessing a declining trend in cervical cancer.

The vaccine has not been proven to prevent a single cervical cancer death.

There are over 100 HPV sub-types against which the vaccine does not provide immunity.

The vaccine can even cause rare side-effects. In Japan, the vaccine was temporarily suspended for this reason.

These adverse effects will erode confidence in the national immunization programme.
The challenges faced by the ministry of skill development and entrepreneurship (MSDE) are complex and varied.

Herculean challenge of skilling 400 million young Indians by 2022

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has been tasked with managing the financing processes while also implementing the skill programmes.

Though skill training has improved in recent years, the absence of job linkages is aggravating the problem of unemployment.

Recent data shows that of the 30.67 lakh trained candidates in June 2017, only 2.9 lakh had received placement offers.

With technological advancement, conventional jobs are squeezed

The bureaucratic red tape is hindering the interaction between the industry and the skilling institutions.

Skilling programmes are the end point of employability creation. The education system is the primary incubator which is lacking in India.

Ministry of finance can manage the financial aspects so that NSDC can focus on its core competencies

Multi-skilling programme is required. As job markets evolve at unprecedented rates, it is important to provide trainees with more than one way to earn a living

Skilling and reskilling older “educated” populations that might be left behind owing to technological advances.

A solutions-based approach, where instructors must employ case studies and present relevant problems

Skill training should be viewed as a complementary part of mainstream education

Cut through bureaucratic red tape, implementing structural changes to the pedagogy of the skill training system, and installing regulatory mechanisms

Ensure that electricians, plumbers, agricultural machine operators and other skilled trade workers update their skills regularly as practiced in most developed nations

The coursework should be industry focused and the practical trainings should be more than just theoretical work.

The interaction between the industry and the training institutions still needs improvement

CSR funds can be used to invest in skills training by the employers.

Including industry best practices in the training modules.

Providing skill development programs for women, marginalized communities, tribals and people with disabilities to enable them to enter today’s labour market.

Today, India is one of the youngest nations in the world, with more than 62% of the population in the working age group.

Around 250 million young people will be joining the workforce over the next decade.

The level of competition in the future will be so high that people will have to skill multiple times to survive in their field.

The economy is now diversifying from being largely agro-based to a manufacturing and service-based economy.

This has resulted in an increased demand for skilled labour.

Much of India’s workforce is already hampered with outdated and irrelevant skills.

As technology continues to surge forward, both blue- and white-collar jobs will become increasingly sparse.

The government’s analysis says that by 2022, 24 sectors will need an additional 109 million skilled workers.

Market-relevant skills are needed in today’s highly competitive job market.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data depicts skills shortage in India

India’s young and aspirational population has been regarded as the saviour and driver of future economic growth.

The government launched the Skill India mission which aims to train over 400 million people in India in different skills by 2022.

Various schemes have been launched to further the aim of skill development.

The objective is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.

India signed a loan agreement with World Bank under ‘Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion’ (Sankalp) project

World Bank will provide USD 250 million loan to India for skill development programme to support livelihood.

The objective is to enhance institutional mechanisms for skills development and increase access to quality and market-relevant training for the work force

Skills training for female trainees and other disadvantaged groups
Providing solar-powered systems across primary health centres can improve health outcomes.

Solar energy can bridge the gaps in electricity access in rural healthcare facilities.

Solar energy could help PHCs augment or even substitute traditional grid-based power systems.

Help in transition towards a low-carbon, climate-smart healthcare system.

Solar systems can facilitate uninterrupted electricity supply critical for 24/7 emergency services, deliveries and neonatal care.

Solar-powered PHCs can maintain cold chains to store vaccines and drugs and operate new-born care equipment.

It could significantly improve in-patient services, out-patient services and laboratory services in rural India.

Solar-powered boat clinics can be used during floods to deliver essential healthcare.

Providing effective healthcare delivery at the last mile, by reducing uncertainty in electricity supply via solar-based solutions.

Helps in saving monthly energy expenses for the hospitals.

Disaster-prone areas that need blood storage units and other health services could invest in higher capacity systems or greater storage capacity.

There must be a focus on making ‘Solar for Health’ a national priority.

Solar power can be extended to cover subcentres and community health centres.

Scaling solar systems is in India’s interest as it meets the targets of the National Solar Mission as well as the National Health Mission.

Other states must also include solar power in their health centres.

In India, Primary Health Centres (PHCs) ensure last-mile delivery of healthcare services and serve as the backbone of rural India’s public healthcare.

However, many PHCs in the country are either unelectrified or suffer from irregular power supply.

Solar power can help meet the electricity demand which can result in improved healthcare delivery.

Without access to regular power supply, numerous life-saving interventions cannot be undertaken.

Data indicates that one in every two Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in rural India is either unelectrified or suffers from irregular power supply.

Power-deficit PHCs show high maternal and child mortality in rural and tribal areas of the country.

No access to electricity affects diagnostic services, reduces hours of operation to daytime, and forces patients to travel more in search of better healthcare services.

Solar power is reliable, clean and half as cheap as diesel.

To facilitate communication services, clean water supplies, tele-health applications and to retain skilled health workers.

In dental units, patients were sent back home due to power cuts, or they had to wait for hours.

Between 2012 and 2016, Chhattisgarh installed off-grid solar photovoltaic (PV) systems of 2 kW each in 570 PHCs.

Solar-powered PHCs in Chhattisgarh admitted 50% more patients and conducted almost twice the number of child deliveries in a month compared to the power-deficit PHCs.

Patients showed more willingness to get admitted for treatment at the solar-powered PHCs due to facilities like running fans.

90% of PHCs with solar systems reported cost savings due to lower electricity bills or reduced expenditure on diesel.
Transforming India’s Green Revolution by Research and Empowerment for Sustainable Food Supplies (TIGR2ESS)

**Introduction**
- TIGR2ESS project is a collaboration between the UK and India.
- It aims to define the requirements for second, more sustainable Green Revolution in India.
- This project is funded by Global challenges Research fund (GCRF) part of UK Government’s Official Development Assistance commitment.

**Present Crisis**
- To make the entire food system more resilient in the context of changing climate.
- Improve health and nutrition for people across the world.
- The rains are no more reliable.
- Heat waves arrive all of a sudden.
- Changing climate affecting crop growing conditions.
- Farmers are unaware of the improved agricultural techniques and tools.
- They use the old methods which lead to poor yield.
- This results in a poor sale and the poor families remain malnutrition, which forces them to switch to other career options.
- It is becoming quite difficult to get a reliable income from agriculture in many states.
- Our increasing population is creating a growing demand for food.
- A large quantity of food that can be used to feed hungry mouths is rotten in the public procurement system.
- Women are not recognised as farmers and their needs and interests not prioritised in agricultural research.

**Way Forward**
- Empowerment of women farmers by helping them to increase agricultural income.
- Ensure that state resources and services, and knowledge, are equally accessible to women.
- Promotion of crops of millets for human food that is mainly used as animal feed in India.
- These crops have better nutrient balance and are more climate-resilient.
- Bring together science and social science to drive interventions that work for Indian farmers and their communities.
- Addressing crop productivity and water use in India and to identify crops and farming practices for different climatic regions.
- Promoting equal opportunities and enhancing nutrition and health for rural communities.

**Advantages**
- Help in minimizing food wastage and proper utilization of India’s limited resources.
- Promote equal treatment to women in farming as given by right to equality in our constitution.
- Help in increasing farmer’s income and stop the cases of farmer suicides due to the debt trap.
- Solve the problem of Indian Agriculture and ensure sustainable access of food.

**India’s Green Revolution**
- India emerged as the largest agricultural producers after the Green Revolution in 1970’s and 1980’s.
- The record grain outputs helped in sustaining India’s booming population and boosting its economy.
- But the level of success varied from region to region.
- Continued overuse of water, fertilisers and pesticides, together with post-harvest crop losses, has put increasing pressure on natural resources.

**Objectives of the TIGR2ESS project**
- If all resources are utilized with well planning, the cases of suicide and malnutrition can be eliminated from our country.
- Making the entire food system more resilient in the context of changing climate, and improving health and nutrition for people.
- Need to address the challenges in India today, from equality and sustainability in agriculture.
- Ensure that state resources and services, and knowledge resources, are equally accessible to women farmers.
- Smallholder farmers, particularly women, need smart technologies to sustain crop yields.
Major players in India’s digital economy are not only based abroad, but also export data to other jurisdictions.

India’s inability to localise data centres means its digital economy is governed by hundreds of private data protection policies.

Potential drain of economic wealth of a nation. Financial rewards of big data are enjoyed by MNCs located in USA.

Infrastructure in India for efficient data collection and management is lacking.

Recent ransomware attacks have uncovered the vulnerability of even the developed countries towards hacking.

Data minimisation and accountability of those who process and control data.

Personal data in the public interest should be protected and used only for the purposes it was collected.

Understanding the imported technologies to protect data in India.

Infrastructure for efficient data collection and management must be strengthened.

Start-ups can develop technology that enables users to control who gets access to the data about their behaviour patterns in the digital world.

Encouraging formation of native internet giants like how china has done.

Current data protection rules under the Information Technology Act urgently need an update and should reflect modern trends.

Safeguarding privacy rights also needs attention.

Allow companies to pursue independent data protection policies, but monitor their enforcement through a national, multi-stakeholder agency.

Any violation will create a “name and shame” environment and weed out poor practices followed by the companies.

The dawn of the information age opened up great opportunities for the beneficial use of data.

Given the rising internet penetration and growing emphasis on Digital India, it is imperative to protect the sanctity of data generated.

India has 400 million internet users

The internet is essentially a data ecosystem where it is engaged in generation, transmission, consumption and storage of data. So we need to safeguard the privacy of this data.

Individual privacy is a fundamental right limited by reasonable restriction.

To curtail the perils of unregulated and arbitrary use of personal data.

Unauthorised leaks, hacking and other cyber crimes have rendered data bases vulnerable.

For securing digital transactions and addressing customer and privacy protection issues.

Individuals have limited control over how data collected from them are used.

India does not have a separate law for data protection

Section 43A of the Information Technology Act provides a measure of legal protection of personal information.

In 2012, the Justice A.P. Shah Committee recommended a set of principles for a legal framework for protecting privacy.

Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee has issued a White Paper to elicit views from the public for a comprehensive data protection law.

The law must provide an empowered statutory authority to enforce the protection to citizens’ data.

Big data is a term for data sets that are so large or complex that traditional data processing application software is inadequate to deal with them.

It refers to user behavior analytics, or certain other advanced data analytics methods that extract value from data.

Big data with the government is a huge boon for governance.

Consumer habits can be studied and policies can be framed which would then be in line with the need of the hour.

Massive amounts of data generated by cities can be used to improve infrastructure and transport systems as Singapore has done.
The telecom regulator’s support for Net neutrality fulfils constitutional promises

The Internet has spread all over the world, so widely that many believe it is now an essential good.

Preserving the democracy of the internet and users’ right to freedom of speech and expression

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has come out in strong support of Net neutrality

It will ensure a level playing field for services providers to innovate and customize in India

TRAI said, internet service providers should not engage in any discriminatory treatment of content

Judicious and transparent use of national resources for greater public benefit

The regulator seeks to bar any practice where selected content is blocked, degraded, slowed down or granted preferential speeds

The decision based on wide public consultation affirms government stand for people participation in decision making

Net neutrality is “The principle that Internet service providers should enable access to all content and applications without favouring or blocking particular websites.”

Services on the internet must be equally accessible to all and telecom operators cannot discriminate between services.

Both Free Basics and Airtel Zero let users access certain apps and websites for free

It will end discrimination against innovative internet platforms and application service providers who do not have the financial wherewithal

Last year, the TRAI had ruled for Net Neutrality thus banning Facebook’s Free Basics and Airtel Zero.

Without Net neutrality, the new start-ups would be at a disadvantage vis a vis an established players

Basically, the ethos of net neutrality state that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should not give preference to certain content over the other.

Without Net neutrality it would impact both the right to speak and the ability to receive knowledge, hence impacting our right to freedom of speech and expression.

Applications which use the voice over internet protocol (VoIP), have led to reduction in voice-based traffic, putting inordinate pressure on telcos’

Keeping Internet open and prohibits any ISPs from discrimination on basis of content.

Differential pricing recognises the economic principle of paying differently for different levels of service and experience.

The internet use should be facilitated by ensuring plurality and diversity of views, opinions and ideas.

ISPs say differential pricing based on differential levels of service will enable them to recover the massive investment made.

It excludes specialised services and content delivery networks (CDNs) from scope of any rules on net neutrality.

If net neutrality is enforced, then future investments in telecommunications infrastructure will be curtailed, thereby impacting user experience.

Setting up multi-stakeholder body to monitor and investigate whether ISPs are adhering to rules.

It would be detrimental from the consumer point of view as their usage pattern will be controlled by the telecom companies.

A proper mechanism needs to be instituted to make sure that the exceptions are not used as loopholes by the big Internet players.

While voice revenues have shown a decline, data revenues have shown significant growth for telecom companies.

To make digital economy a reality telcos’ must make adequate investments to cater to the explosion of data traffic.

Setting up Multi-stakeholder body
India’s National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination was launched recently to eliminate the mosquito-borne infection by stopping local transmission by 2030. The goal is to control the mosquitoes that spread the infection and human exposure to them. The focus will be on district-based planning, implementation and monitoring.

Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan were certified malaria-free in 2016, and 21 countries are on track to eliminate malaria by 2020. Zambia’s “zambitious” goal to be malaria-free by 2021. A multi-pronged approach, focusing on high-burden areas and vulnerable groups, and supporting states in their efforts to eliminate malaria.

Prevention of infection and early diagnosis and treatment are critical to stop transmission. The state government must declare malaria as a notifiable disease, letting private hospitals report about it to the health department.

Robust surveillance and data collection is essential. To prevent the disease, insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) have been proven very effective. Scaling up the use of nets and indoor residual spraying and other mosquito-control measures are crucial.

Malaria control is one of the best humanitarian investments. We need to invest current resources more efficiently and expand overall financing.

Involving the private sector, both formal and informal. India must learn from the success story of Sri Lanka invoking health diplomacy and get rid of this deadly disease in the coming years. Harnessing innovation and research along with monitoring and surveillance, and community participation. Work has begun, but it needs to be accelerated to meet India’s target to eliminate malaria by 2030.

India accounted for 6% of global malaria cases and 7% of deaths caused by it in 2016, according to World Malaria Report 2017 by WHO.

In contrast, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan achieved malaria-free status in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

India is one of the 15 countries that carry 80% of the global disease burden, according to the report.

In India Malaria deaths in 2016 is the highest in the entire Southeast Asia region. Majority of malaria cases in the country occur in its bordering districts, forests and tribal areas.

Odisha, the highest endemic state of India, reported an increase in malaria cases in 2016. There has been a spurt in vector-borne diseases among children due to lack of preventive measures.

Large number of cases treated in the private sector, are not reported to the government.

80% of malaria cases occurring among 20% of India’s population in 200 high-risk districts.

Malaria is not just a serious health issue, it adversely affects socio-economic conditions of the communities.

A key impediment to eliminating malaria is a weak surveillance system.

India was able to detect only 8% of cases which shows the poor surveillance mechanism in India.

Lack of sustainable and predictable international and domestic funding. India due to low funding per person at risk and resistance to certain insecticides — is only expected to achieve a 20%-40% reduction.

Risks posed by conflict in malaria endemic zones.

The emergence of a drug-resistant strain of the malaria parasite in south Vietnam which is close to India’s north-eastern border.

Considering India’s vast territory, it is often difficult to implement mobile measures during population movement between states and union territories.
Any damage to the fragile systems could leave a lasting impact on the marine life in the region.

It could also delay the post-monsoon harvesting of mussels by fishermen, affecting their livelihood.

Since coastal populations in India are rising rapidly, it is expected there will be an increase in cyclone-related losses in the 21st century.

The economic losses will also be greater because more assets are being created in India's coastal cities.

Cyclones are known to originate in both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea sides of the northern Indian Ocean.

The Bay of Bengal side witnesses four times more cyclones than the Arabian Sea side on average.

Meteorologists say the relatively colder waters of the Arabian Sea are not conducive to the formation and intensification of cyclones.

The eastern coast receives cyclones that are formed near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and also from the Pacific Ocean, where the frequency of 'typhoons', is quite high.

Many of the big cyclones in recent years, like Phailin in 2013, Hudhud in 2014 or Vardah in 2016, developed near the Andaman Sea.

Most of these cyclones weaken after encountering a big landmass. Therefore, these do not travel to the Arabian Sea side.

The western coast witnesses only those cyclones that originate locally or from the Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka.

Since the turn of the century, at least eight violent cyclones, including Cyclone Ockhi, have hit the subcontinent.

Firstly we cannot deny that climate change is taking place and we are responsible for it.

Global warming is leaving millions of people vulnerable to more frequent natural disasters.

Trends clearly show that climate change and extreme weather events are interrelated.

According to study, there is an increasing destructiveness from tropical cyclones in the past 30 years.

Future warming of oceans, which has indeed taken place, will lead to increasing destructive potential of cyclones.

The only path left for us is to build resilience, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Extreme weather events have to be countered with mitigation strategies if we are to soften the suffering of people.

The structural measures include construction of cyclone shelters, construction of cyclone resistant buildings, bridges, canals, drains, communication and power transmission networks etc.

Non-structural measures like early warning dissemination systems, management of coastal zones, awareness generation and disaster risk management and capacity building of all the stakeholders involved.

The recent Cyclone Ockhi was the most intense tropical cyclone in the Arabian Sea since Cyclone Megh in 2015.

The deep depression in the south of Kanyakumari and west of Sri Lanka intensified and resulted into a cyclonic storm.

The name Ockhi was given by Bangladesh which in Bengali means 'eye'.

The significance of cyclone Ockhi lies in the area in which it developed.

Mostly, cyclones are known to originate in both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, but Ockhi originated near the south-western coast of Sri Lanka.

It travelled along the coasts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, towards the Lakshadweep islands.

Further it took a north-easterly turn towards the Maharashtra and Gujarat coastlines where cyclones in this area are not a common phenomenon.

Since the cyclone developed near the coast, the lead time for the forecast was much less than in other recent cyclone cases.

Ockhi was described as a 'very severe cyclonic storm', the third strongest category according to India Meteorological Department (IMD).

It has caused destruction not only on land but in the near-shore areas of the seabed and long stretches of the shoreline along the coast of Thiruvananthapuram.

Extensive damage to the mussel beds that harbour the rich marine biodiversity of the region.

The intense wave activity triggered by the storm has ravaged large areas of the underwater ecosystem.

The cyclone storm brought heavy rains and some areas suffered extensive crop damage due to strong wind that uprooted coconut trees and other plantation crops.

Cyclone Ockhi has once again exposed the state of disaster preparedness in India.
The first of a six scorpene submarine, Kalvari, was handed over to the Indian Navy for its commissioning. Kalvari is named after the dreaded Tiger Shark, a deadly deep sea predator of the Indian Ocean. Kalvari was built indigenously under Project 75I, at Mumbai’s Mazagon Docks in collaboration with French firm DCNS. Kalvari can carry 18 torpedoes and travel 1,020km underwater. It can dive up to a depth of 300 metres to elude enemy detection. It has superior stealth and the ability to launch crippling attacks with precision-guided weapons. The attack can be carried out underwater or from the surface.

INS Kalvari was commissioned into Indian Navy’s fleet after a delay of five years. India’s underwater fleet is way behind China which has far superior underwater capability.

As far as Project-75I is concerned, little progress has been made in the past 10 years. The Indian Navy does not have a dedicated deep submergence rescue vessel (DSRV) even as it enters its 51st year. The long-delayed DSRV acquisition symbolises India’s systemic incompetence.

The complacency in decision-making and ineffectiveness in policy formulation have adversely affected the Indian military profile.

Constraints related to recruitment significantly impact the modernisation and acquisition process.

On the 50th anniversary of the Navy’s submarine arm, it’s a wake-up call on acquiring dedicated rescue vessel. We have to focus on using our underwater capabilities in a more innovative manner to meet the desired political objectives. India must have a credible underwater capability with a judicious mix of conventional and nuclear-propelled submarines.

India needs to push harder to meet the target of building 24 submarines by the year 2030. Capacity to remain under water for a long time needs to be augmented. Collaboration with countries having comparative advantage in building submarines.

Research and development needs to be encouraged in field of submarine manufacturing.

According to Spykman theory of rimland, the coastal areas or littorals of Eurasia are key to controlling the World Island. This means those who control the littorals can control the world. So if India wants to be a global power it needs to strengthen its capability in Indian Ocean Region.

The submarine arm of the Indian Navy is celebrating its golden jubilee this year.

INS Kalvari would be a significant milestone in the navy’s submarine-building programme.

The submarine reflects India’s progress towards the ‘Make-in-India’ initiative.

The second of the Scorpens under construction, Khanderi, is undergoing rigorous phase of sea trials.

India operates a fleet of 14 conventional submarines, including INS Kalvari, INS Chakra and INS Arihant.

The commissioning of INS Arihant last year completed India’s nuclear triad or the ability to launch strategic weapons from land, air and sea.

The Navy has also invested in building conventional boats in India through partnership programmes with foreign suppliers.

Navy has developed skill-sets to build warships for tropical conditions which are export-worthy to other Indian Ocean littoral countries.

The Indian Navy is an instrument of maritime diplomacy.

It involves goodwill visits by warships to foreign ports, naval exercises, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

As the biggest nation in the Indian Ocean region, it becomes incumbent upon India to ensure peace and stability.

The strengthening of Navy’s capability is important due to the Chinese Navy ships and submarine deployments in the Indian Ocean Region every year.

The Indian and Chinese navies come into contact with each other either in the waters of the Indian Ocean or the South China Sea.

In June 2016 a Chinese spy ship tailed two Indian Navy warships in Japanese territorial waters.

The naval power is critical for India to consolidate its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean Region & South China Sea.
India imposes higher tax on petroleum products thereby reenergizing the renewable energy sector.

This has significantly increased petrol and diesel price while serving as signal to reduce CO2 emissions.

India has increased the coal cess to Rs 400 per tonne.

The carbon tax will be a Pigovian Tax which balances the marginal social costs and additional emissions.

Higher prices according to their carbon content will induce households, including the rich, to look for greener substitutes.

It will provide more employment since the employment elasticity in greener forms of energy is higher than those in fossil fuel-based energy.

A significant part of more than 3% of India’s GDP currently spent on pollution-induced diseases will come down.

It will also increase tax-revenue which can be used for other green projects.

Carbon tax is regressive in nature — it affects the poor more than the rich.

The highest rise in price will be in fuel and energy which affects the poor.

High transportation cost will lead to inflation and affect the informal sector.

Increasing carbon taxes is alone insufficient to reduce emissions as income levels rise.

Carbon revenue can be used for an in-kind transfer of free electricity to those who contribute less carbon than the economy average.

Universal travel passes with a pre-loaded balance to compensate for the rise in transport costs.

Encourage the use of green public transport.

Carbon tax regimes will only be effective if harmonised internationally because energy-intensive businesses may move to less strict national regimes.

Most practical way to change energy consumption habits is to lower the price of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Air pollution is one of the biggest public concerns in India today.

Since the early 2000s, carbon emissions have increased because of high growth in the Indian economy.

A carbon tax aims to set a price on the carbon content of energy consumed in the production or consumption of goods.

Emissions can be curbed only if people move away from fossil fuels and adopt greener forms of energy.

We need to tax carbon to achieve this.

A part of the carbon revenue thus generated can be used for a systemic overhaul of the energy mix.

Energy mix needs to be remodelled through investments in clean renewable energy and low-emissions bioenergy.

Raising the level of energy efficiency through investments in building retrofits, grid upgrades, and industrial efficiency.

This energy mix requires an additional 1.5% of GDP annually over the next two decades.

This expenditure can be financed by the carbon tax revenue, which will be a revenue-neutral policy with no implications on the fiscal deficit.

A Lancet report states that around 19 lakh people die prematurely every year from diseases caused by outdoor and indoor air pollution.

A study shows that the lungs of children who grow up in polluted environments like Delhi are 10% smaller compared to the lungs of children who grow up in the U.S.

This is a public health emergency.

In 2014, India’s total carbon emissions were more than three times the levels in 1990, as per World Bank data.

India’s heavy dependence on fossil fuels and a dramatically low level of energy efficiency.

Industry actors do not need to actively monitor and limit their CO2 output.

About 75% of all greenhouse gas emissions are CO2 emissions produced through burning fossil fuels — oil, coal and natural gas.

Therefore we need a comprehensive policy to curb pollution.
The most fundamental benefit of trophy hunting to lion conservation is that it provides a financial incentive to maintain lion habitat.

Trophy hunting is the selective hunting of wild game for human recreation and involves payment for the hunting.

In Kenya and India, where hunting is banned, wildlife populations do not seem to fare better than in countries where hunting is ongoing.

The trophy is the animal or part of the animal kept, and usually displayed, to represent the success of the hunt.

In South Africa and Namibia, where trophy hunting is allowed, the wildlife populations seem to be doing better.

The primary game sought is usually the oldest and most mature animal from a given population.

Trophy hunting has implicated in the recovery of black rhino and the straight-horned markhor.

Trophy hunting has both firm supporters and strong opponents.

It is stated that habitat loss and degradation, loss of prey-base and conflict with local communities over livestock losses as primary threats.

It takes place over a large area in Sub-Saharan Africa.

There is limited evidence to show that trophy hunting has substantial negative implications at national or regional levels.

Hunting is carried out in about 1.4 million sq km in Africa which is more than 22% of area covered by national parks in Africa.

According to IUCN, trophy hunting when well managed can be sustainable and generate economic incentives for conservation of species and its habitats.

In Africa ecotourism seems unviable given the landscapes are not conducive to tourism.

Often old and unproductive animals are used, but the species wins due to increased funds for its conservation.

Experts claim that compared to ecotourism, high-value trophy hunting has a lower ecological footprint.

Putting certain age restrictions that allow males to breed before hunting could reduce the impact of trophy hunting.

The trophy hunting of black rhino and white rhino in Namibia and South Africa is legal and is regulated by CITES. In Kenya and Botswana it is banned.

Need for proper regulated trophy hunting for conservation in African countries.

Much of the opposition to trophy hunting derives from an animal rights perspective rather than an objective evaluation of conservation impact.

Local voices need to be recognised and accommodated in the policy debates on trophy hunting.

Some fear that trophy hunting can endanger lion populations.

Elimination of corruption so that the actual benefits of hunting go to the locals and not for animal conservation.

Lack of proper hunting regulations, rent-seeking and corruption.

Trophy hunting must be allowed only to licensed hunters and who are committed to conservation and comply with ethical standards.

Trophy hunting also has the inherent risk of illegal hunting that may have serious negative consequences.

There is perception that hunting industry does not provide significant benefits to the communities where it occurs.

Removing even 5% of high quality male animals risks wiping out the entire population.

In past human hunting has led to extinction of many animals such as Zebra like Quagga which was once common in Southern Africa.

It also led to extinction of Tasmanian Tiger.

Since hunters are allowed to keep the parts of animals as their trophies, it might result in illegal trade of ivory, skin, horns, etc.

Wildlife with less favourable traits would be allowed to pass on their genes if wildlife with quality traits are hunted.